

THREE:

Person and Grace

1. *Chasing Ekstasis*

In the mystery of mutual indwelling, we perceive the total and perfect communion of nature. But there is a problem with nature in the mindset of radical and romantic personalism, the formulations of which are characterised by indicators of severance. In these oppositional terms nature lies in, or rather forms, the dark, injurious, tragic, godless reality, a reality that cannot be transformed. It is discredited as it is more or less identified with the Fall and all that that implies. On the other side, high up in the clouds, stands the authentic person, far and above any reality of sin, identified with love, freedom, grace, and being itself. And, obviously, there is only one way for someone to reach it: by escaping from one's dark mother.¹

Now, what is the case concerning God's nature? In the personalist outlook, the divine essence inevitably maintains an unspecified, subsidiary role in the being and life of God. The divine Person transcends its very nature, thus proposing the way and the mode of being an authentic person. Because nature is coupled with necessity, as it imposes certain irreversible laws and insuperable limits, it must by definition impart the burden of a tragic existence. Fortunately, Zizioulas argues, 'When we say that God *is*, we do not bind the personal freedom of God – the being of God is not an ontological "necessity" or a simple "reality", but we ascribe the being of God to His personal freedom. God as Father, and not as substance, perpetually confirms through "being" his free will to exist', thus proving the divine being to be unconditioned by any necessity of existence.² Accordingly, communion is a product of freedom as a result of a person, the Father. Communion and essence come from His free choice.³ This is the ecstatic character of personhood – a version of the Heideggerian *ekstasis* – an escape and liberation from the confines of an impersonal nature to constitute the very being as communion.

The consequence is all the clearer in Christology. Christ Himself, according to the personalistic interpretation, is supposedly above His natural qualities.⁴ Confined in dialectical dichotomies, such interpretation overstates the 'free person' of the Logos, seriously degrading the mystery of the union of God and Man, that is of the uncreated and created natures in Christ. This tends to disarm the fervently advocated patristic notion of the *communicatio idiomatum*, namely the community of natural attributes by virtue of the interpenetration of the two perfect natures in Christ incarnate. *Communicatio idiomatum* is neither a metaphysical concept nor a useful theological device, but the very core of the mystery of salvation/deification in Christ: Christ acts uniquely in both of His two perfect natures; He acts as God by nature and as man by nature, simultaneously and inseparably. The exchange of the natural properties designates the ineffable, unconfused union of divinity and humanity, the inflowing of the deifying fire which effects the deification of the created nature.⁵

From another point of view, if one attributes Christ's will to His person, so as to safeguard His 'freedom', then one must recognise one will and one single energy in Christ, and not the union of two natural wills and energies, corresponding to the double nature of Christ. Thus, all orthodoxy falls into the most rigid monophysitism. In strident contradiction, the Fathers, as we have already seen, associate what is common with nature or essence, leaving the unique and incommunicable properties to the hypostases. Accordingly, on the trinitarian plane, as John of Damascus argues, 'If the will . . . is hypostatic, the Son must thus forsooth have a different will from what the Father has: for that which is hypostatic is characteristic of the person only.'⁶

Now, let us turn to the patristic approach to nature. The concept of nature is a keystone in the spirituality of the Greek East as well as of the Irish West. The Fathers never accepted an ontological association of nature with necessity. We see that Gregory of Nazianzus does not hesitate to say that it is absolutely impossible and inadmissible for God *not* to exist; clearly he does not see in this assertion any limitation of God's absolute freedom.⁷ A personal will is not the cause either of divine essence or persons or activities, says Cyril of Alexandria, and this does not at all introduce a necessity to the uncreated being; for God exists apart from anybody's will, including His own.⁸

Whenever we say that the Trinity is love and light and justice and goodness, we know that we refer to essential characteristics of God. In this sense we would not be far from the truth in saying that God's energy, His active presence in creation and history, is determined by His nature, which nonetheless is not an object of enquiry. God is good according to nature and Creator according to nature and God according to nature, and yet all these things that 'belong to' and 'define' His nature

do not subject Him to necessity.⁹ Although His essential attributes (goodness, benevolence, holiness) are not products of His will, they are far from being unwilling.¹⁰ Thus, nature/essence ‘moves voluntarily and sovereignly’ through its energies, which are not external but the very ‘movement of nature’, or else ‘God-in-activity’.¹¹ If all divine energies are ascribed to the common divine essence, will and freedom should also be perceived as the common trinitarian life. This nature is supra-essential; it neither precedes nor succeeds being or Persons. Accordingly, God’s ontological freedom is not freedom from His own nature; God’s freedom means that God is the sole self-subsisting and reigning uncreated reality, which is the fundamental law and principle of everything else – of all that belongs to the category of created nature.¹²

Now, what is the case with created being? Here again, the personalist says that real humanity is ‘hypostatic’ in being ‘ekstatic’, that is, free from its natural garb. Freedom is not identified as conformity with nature but in contrast with it.¹³ Human nature *per se* is considered as separated from God. Yet, such an assumption can hardly be corroborated by patristic testimony. In the created order, our experience is that intelligible nature is capable of good as well as the reverse. Its position on the ‘borderline’ has the meaning of the liberty of choice,¹⁴ beyond any necessity, and beyond any ontological inclination towards the abyss from which it emerged. Many terms, more or less synonymous, have been employed to render this mystery of freedom: προαίρεσις, αὐτεξούσιον, ἐλευθερία, ἐξουσία, θέλημα.¹⁵ In its pre-lapsarian state, as natural will or the noetic appetite of the soul, it was directed towards God.¹⁶ This is a power belonging to nature and being used by the person. The nature of man – possessing its perfection by virtue of its proper principle¹⁷ – was created to share in the divine light and glory and any other quality observed in the divine nature, including eternal existence as its inherent faculty. And this has been shown in the comprehensive utterance of one phrase: that man was made *in the image of God*. This image and likeness is ‘a summary of all things that characterize Deity’:

For as the eye, by virtue of the bright ray which is by nature wrapped up in it, is in fellowship with the light, and by its innate capacity draws to itself that which is akin to it, so was it needful that a certain affinity with the Divine should be mingled with the nature of man, in order that by means of this correspondence it might aim at that which was native to it.¹⁸

Ériugena follows the same lines when he says that the trinity of human nature (falling under the ontological terms of essence, power and activity) expresses in itself the image and likeness of the creative Trinity.¹⁹ One finds it hardly justifiable to agree that the notion of the image of God ‘cannot relate to nature . . . but to personhood’.²⁰

On this point the personalist invokes John of Damascus for support. According to the sage of Damascus, the human being differs from non-rational beings by 'leading nature rather than being led by it', whereas the animals are subject to necessity.²¹ Yet, reading the chapters on the physiology of the human being, from which the foregoing citation is taken, we see something different. St John's exposition includes the term 'nature' both in its broader sense, as the essential ground of humanity and all beings, and in its narrow sense, as the specific laws that circumscribe the bodily aspect as well as the unintelligible (passive and appetitive) part of the soul. It is in this narrow sense that the human being is called to lead nature and not to be led by it. But man is created with 'nature visible and invisible', namely with a body and an intelligible and noetic soul, the latter being identified par excellence with the divine image, where freedom springs and blossoms. 'For the phrase "after His image" clearly refers to the noetic character and free will, whereas "after His likeness" means likeness in virtue so far as that is possible for human nature.'²² It is the soul (mind being its purest part) that 'enjoys freedom and volition and energy'; and all these natural qualities 'it has received of the grace of the Creator, of which grace it has received both its being and this particular kind of nature'.²³ And, as Maximus says, the soul – being the very image of God and deified by means of the power of love – takes care of the body and acquaints it with God, 'itself mediating to the body the indwelling presence of its Creator'.²⁴

The movement of the soul is spontaneous, precisely as nature is spontaneous, Athanasius asserts.²⁵ And Maximus, citing a fragment from Clement, remarks that 'will is a natural power, which desires what is in accordance with nature . . . a natural appetite, corresponding with the nature of the rational creature . . . a natural spontaneous movement of the self-determining mind.'²⁶ That is why we can state that 'the nature of logical beings is not bound to necessity'; for '*according to nature* the intelligible part of the soul rules over that which is void of reason'.²⁷ Given that the nature of the human being always remains incomprehensible, one may wonder how free will has to be excluded from such mystery. John of Damascus concludes:

The will is natural, and we hold not that it is dominated by necessity, but that it is free. . . . For it is not only the divine and uncreated nature that is free from the bonds of necessity, but also the intellectual and created nature. And this is manifest: for God, being by nature good and being by nature the Creator and by nature God, is not all this of necessity. For who is there to introduce this necessity?²⁸

Gregory of Nyssa juxtaposes the conspicuous contradiction of the original state 'that it was good' (Gen. 1:31) with the 'present condition

of things', whose external observation induces attacks against human nature. Still, nothing abnormal in this present condition, no ugliness or imperfection, no tendency to misery, no evil manifestation, seems to divert the Fathers' acute sight from that royal origin and perspective. The Creator 'incorporated in human nature the principles of all that is excellent', including the gift of free will. 'For if necessity in any way was the master of the life of man, the "image" would have been falsified in that particular part, by being estranged owing to this unlikeness to its archetype. For how can that nature which is under a yoke and bondage to any kind of necessity be called an image of the reigning nature?'²⁹ Nature possesses, as a precious endowment, the self-ruling and independent principle, and this is what enables the participation of good.

And yet, if this be so, how is evil engendered from within, springing up in the will? Here is the rub. Nature, 'inasmuch as the subsistence itself of creation had its rise in change',³⁰ carried the potentiality of returning to the logical opposite of goodness, namely to the state of non-being, from which it was called. But to close the eyes to the sun lies not in the eye's specification, intrinsic quality or essential entelechy. Evil has its origin in activity on our part that opposes nature. Thus, the ancestral man 'on his creation', but certainly not *because* of his created state, 'through an initial movement' perverted natural longing and began to experience life in a way that is contrary to nature. The fall of everything was a result of personal, deliberative will, or rather a co-operation of personal wills, that of the fiend 'craftily mixing up badness in man's will' and that of the human person. Nature's fall followed on from the person's sin.³¹ The personal use of natural power can either urge towards the divine model, or provoke evil, which is a deprivation of natural energy. The person can use all natural capacities against its very nature. And the cause of such a vicious cycle should be traced not in the perfect natural will, but in the 'gnomic' will, a kind of weakened, autonomous, self-directed will, the expression of the egocentric individual, which stems ultimately from an impetuous desire for divinisation without God.

Hence, nature is subject to a double reading: as either the implacable power to whose alleged laws (or 'lusty stealth') man's corrupt purpose and inventions are bound; or conversely, as the mother whose 'offices' are blessed and fruitful, but who is scourged by the effects of personal malice. In the first case nature is used in the sense of each one's nature – that is to say, the person, whose idiosyncrasy perceives, appropriates and uses what is universal. Such abuse is what puzzles Shakespeare's King Lear, who wonders in agony if there is any cause in nature that makes a hard heart! No doubt, he would agree with Maximus the Confessor that human nature is bound to sin and decay only because of the personal *gnome* – the use (or rather misuse) of free choice.³² In

the long run such abuse of the inner powerhouse fabricates a 'second', false nature that counterfeits and violates the authentic one. Therefore, if there is something that imposes necessity to human nature and the human person, this is the passions – parasitic weeds spawned in the hotbed of the gnomonic will. On this account, when the spiritual man 'separates what is natural from what is opposed to nature', he 'surpasses that power which endeavours to subject freedom to slavery'. But the Creator 'never subjected mankind to the yoke of a strong compulsion'.³³

Furthermore, in the cosmic dimension there is a kind of deep affiliation of the whole of creation – the subservient nature – to the uncreated nature. This is due to uncreated grace pervading every created being and sustaining its very existence in an unending creative activity. This grace – this grandeur with which the world is charged – is imprinted on every essence. Nothing is 'without its portion of divine fellowship . . . the lower nature being mingled with the supramundane'.³⁴ This is a field where Irish theology offers its best. For the Irish this natural world, with all its personal and impersonal entities in their very concreteness and reality, is not only the locus of the benign power of God but is also empowered by this life-giving grace. Therefore, when the Irish invoke the natural elements in their poetry for protection or praise, it is because they recognise within them the all-encompassing divine energy.³⁵ There are two ways of expressing this reality, both of which are to be found in Irish and Greek exegesis. The first, and closer to the 'Celtic' mentality, is the scriptural statement that the life of everything is the uncreated life that was in Christ before all ages, according to the Johannine phrasing 'Quod factum est in ipso vita erat' (John 1:3–4). As the Irish catechist asserts:

Neither heaven, nor earth and all that are in them . . . dwells in itself but rather in Him, that is, in God . . . The life of whatever has been created is in Him; . . . Thus, the creature always remains in the Creator . . . For before they were created, they were life in Him, and that life was not created but is itself Creator . . . because the Word is God, then, the life which is in Him is God, and in that life is the light of men and women.³⁶

It is fascinating that the anonymous catechist insists particularly on the uncreated nature of life that is 'within' God (i.e. not identified with essence or person) and at the same time God and Creator, which becomes the very life of beings in perpetuity. This is the 'one single life penetrating all things in a manner that meets each one's premises and capacity of participation', according to the Greek Fathers.³⁷ But the Greek mind is more philosophical. It proceeds to a second expression of God's immanence in creation, which is the omnipresence of Christ

as the *logos* of everything. The term *logos* – a borrowing from Greek philosophy – was first applied to Christ in St John's Gospel, possibly because it bears a wide range of connotations: word, utterance, immanent rationality, meaning, and principle with teleological nuances. It thus became a term intrinsically connecting the divine Word with the quintessence of every particle of creation. Every being carries the *logos* of its essence – an act of will instituting the natural condition, in accordance with which a creature participates in being – which is contained, from all eternity, in the divine *Logos*. Everything is within Him and He is the One in all the *logoi* together, and the *telos* (the ultimate purpose) of everything. The Logos, who was incarnated in the last times, is an ineffable, supernatural and divine fire present, as in the burning bush, in the being of everything that exists. He is immanent as incarnated through the *logoi* and as participated through 'a greater measure of the divine activity'.³⁸

This Christological dimension has a pneumatological corollary: this indwelling life of creation is the Holy Spirit, says Maximus. Or, more precisely, 'the Holy Spirit vivifies or activates the inner *logoi* of all things in accordance with their nature'; what he later calls 'the natural seeds'.³⁹ And this is why creation functions as a pointer to God. Through the natural activity of created beings we discern the power that gives created beings their life, and God's presence is clearly proclaimed.⁴⁰ In the Irish mentality, nature, as the whole created reality, blesses God in its inescapable return to Him; and along with God it is the sole teacher of the human being.⁴¹

Among the Irish, the absorbent and eclectic mind of Ériugena, drawing on both Eastern and Western streams, and expanding the affirmation that 'the divinity beyond being is the being of all',⁴² holds that every thing exists as a 'creative word', conceived within the Word above time and space. Christ, 'the divine ray . . . is beautifully multiplied' and 'diffused' into beings, so that they may subsist and return to their source. He is in a deep and real sense 'the light and life of all things', for no essence or substance exists or can be contemplated but within Him.⁴³ Ériugena follows the common Irish stream, where Christ is the only life of all things; as Logos, without diminution He sustains and penetrates every creature, which is 'life in life', so that 'the wood and the stone are alive in God'.⁴⁴ Accordingly, for Columbanus, 'the Trinity fills heaven and earth and every creature',⁴⁵ not simply figuratively or in an extrinsic manner: Trinity embraces all things from within. Its uncreated activity or will becomes the being of all created being, so deeply and truly, that the divine nature is also considered to create itself in the creature, as the Logos is born in human beings.⁴⁶ In this sense, all creatures are 'theophanies', says Ériugena, citing Romans 1:20, although not equally.⁴⁷ All the same, as the Greek Fathers

conclude, the divine nature 'touches every being in an equal manner, keeping everything within it through the all-encompassing power', 'permeates all . . . illumines land and sea and mingles with the air', and 'the healthy mind believes that God fills everything', as the soul pervades all the members of the body, interior and exterior.⁴⁸

Thus, even in its post-lapsarian condition, nature is at work in man, because it has an actual participation in God's being. The human being is part of it, it is expecting its salvation with the human being, the moment when it will glow with the fire of Divinity – a gift already given through Christ's salvific economy.⁴⁹ Then, creation and salvation are blended in divine unified activity. A thorough reading of Maximus' Christological insights shows that 'if creation as well is due to grace, then salvation must consist in a kind of enhancement of the original grace' and that 'every divine act in relation to the cosmos has the mystery of Christ in view. This means that the created status and the redeemed status are not to be separated into two unrelated dimensions.'⁵⁰

On this account the Greek Fathers insist on the naturalness of spiritual life. The notion of *physis*, in its potential and in its destiny, has been indicated as a key to Basilian asceticism, according to which God does not demand a moral régime at odds with the essential qualities of beings, even though ascetic effort is needed for these qualities to be brought to light and fruition. So it is by nature that man brings his mind to bear upon the appetites, to channel thoughts and have control over emotions, and no less natural is the capacity for and intensity of love.⁵¹ For in the very nature of the soul God's love and creative will is beheld, since the longing for the noetic image is an essential attribute of the human being.⁵² Therefore, the human being's perfection is not a sort of amputation of his nature (involving body, senses, imagination and the other dynamic drives of human existence) through any kind of skilled artistry.⁵³ That is why in the Byzantine liturgy the supplicant prays not for release from his physical senses, with a view to reaching a state of apathy, but for the liberation of his own physical senses 'from the deadly passions'.⁵⁴ Thus, the imitation of divine nature, far from truncating human nature, is a restoration of true human nature.

We see this in the allegory that Maximus finds in Moses' passage through the Red Sea. Moses breaks up the deception caused by the fluidity of the sensible realm and makes visible to the people (and the individual) the 'firm and unshakeable ground beneath their feet', by which he means 'the foundation of nature that is concealed below the level of superficial sensation'.⁵⁵ Below the surface lies a pure and stable nature, charged with love, looking towards its destiny and disclosed through ascesis. This natural 'seed' of good is cultivated by the 'spiritual' man 'in a natural movement of ascent and conformity to his own origin and principle'.⁵⁶

What the spiritual life seeks is 'pure nature' dispatched and liberated from the unnatural state of vicious passions.⁵⁷ This nature, given by God and filled with His grace, is the content and the ground of the person, and no less reveals the authentic person, insofar as that person follows its nature. That is why, according to the Irish commentator, the 'conversion' of a human being to himself in the act of repentance and self-awareness is equivalent to conversion to the goodness of nature. The exhortation 'go to your home' means 'go to your good nature', which is the goldmine whence free choice, asceticism, prudence and wisdom are drawn.⁵⁸ Therefore, if we wish to surmount the *logos* of being – namely its measure and condition of existence – in an illusory flight of ecstatic transcendence from nature to a 'relational ontology', we simply become irrational and we lead existence to its fall.⁵⁹ On the contrary, if a being moves according to its *logos*, which exists in and with God, it comes to be in God.⁶⁰ Man's salvation is not a salvation *from* nature, but the salvation *of* nature, whether insensible and intelligible. For the human being – as the index of a great volume – recapitulates in it the whole of creation.

Thus, it would be inappropriate to present the authentic person as a transcendental ontological category, realised in the very act of transcending nature. This is quite clear in the patristic approach to the Triune Divinity, where, while the person is a relational entity, *schesis* (relation), signified by the very names of the divine hypostases (the Son's eternal relationship to the Father), indicates the essential conjunction.⁶¹ Let us consider the most essential quality of the Trinity, Love itself, which finds its supreme theological expression in John 14:20, where the Son is said to be in the Father and in us, and we in Him. Love points to the divine Persons' natural oneness, and we could not make of it a personal property, i.e. the love/freedom identified with the person of the Father. In the same vein, the Spirit cannot be called love hypostatically, but love is its essential energy.⁶² A kind of love that originates from the particular person, or, being identified with personhood, precedes nature, would just create, invent or fabricate no more and nothing deeper than defective asymmetrical relations, an external unity of relational entities. On the contrary, for the Greek Fathers, love is a fruit and an expression of essential relationship. That is why the Alexandrian Father says that 'the manner of the union is not defined by the law of love'.⁶³ God is Love, Light and Life, but these are not hypostatic, but rather the essential energies. The One, Triune God is active and willing and loving. That God is love, explains Maximus, means that God is the originator and emitter of *agape* and *eros* to creation, for these exist within Him.⁶⁴ The existence of love and will, as well as their content, is determined by nature,⁶⁵ albeit they are personally manifested.

Not the person as such, but nature, is a movement toward communion. And this movement is free, for God's nature is not subject to limitations, and freedom is also an endowment of human nature, since the latter has 'the principle of all excellence' and participates in God's essential properties as His image.⁶⁶ Although natural and historical reality is now a determining factor for the human being, the whole of creation is to be transfigured, that is glorified in God's holy fire, whose sparks and warmth is already present and felt. Indeed, within this essential movement the person becomes a universal reality: it bears within itself the whole of human nature, without appropriating it; in other words, it includes all other persons within itself and thus is a unique reflection of them all. But at the same time human nature, in its richness, includes and unites all particular entities, so that we can say that there is One Man. Philosophically speaking, 'the more universal a principle is, the greater the degree to which it embraces and unifies the more particular principles.'⁶⁷ Absolute ontological freedom does not properly characterise a transcendental person, but is the grace to be granted eschatologically to the whole of creation. It is not the person, in its transcendentalist sense, but the human being as a whole who is not of this world, by virtue of the uncreated grace sanctifying the entire human nature.⁶⁸ The whole of man is to become 'not of this world' (John 15:19) in the sense not of escaping from the world but in the sense of receiving the deifying grace in a unique manner from the uncreated reality.

At the same time the human being is a particularity determined by space and time. This is supposedly Man's tragedy as biological hypostasis, one remains caught in one's individuality as a result of one's specific created constitution.⁶⁹ But here a painful question looms: what exactly is the individual – the particular human being – before reaching the state of 'being not of this world'? Is it something deprived of God's spiration? Is it a being ontologically inferior to the 'authentic', 'ecclesial' being? We need to consider that the image of the imperceptible divine essence is engraved on and shines in human nature and in each particular person from their creation – an image that was never extinguished, never turned into a mass of perdition, even in stains of transgression.⁷⁰ Also for the Irish commentator, the human being is the royal palace (*aula regia*) of God, containing, as a microcosm, not only the 'light of virtues' but also the 'shades of vices'; that is, before the realisation of one's potential of sanctification to which one is called.⁷¹ This is the reason the Fathers identified the person with the ordinary individual, while speaking of the deification of the whole human being in its entirety and integrity: flesh, intellect, heart, volition, energy and one's whole spectrum of qualities.

As we saw earlier, in the Irish environment the person–nature dialectical approach is nowhere to be found, any kind of ontologisation of the person is entirely unwitnessed, and nature is wholly affirmed as the good work of the Creator, sanctified and glorified through the incarnation of the Logos. Christ is emphatically presented as ‘*verus homo natura*’, from the nature of His mother, a man in ‘*ratione, carne et natura*’.⁷² Although the ‘glowing coal’ of human ‘good nature’ was extinguished by the first-born of this earth, it was illuminated again by the Holy Spirit through the incarnation.⁷³ Nature is by no means truncated but released from bondage. In the Paschal mystery the eschatological destination of nature is connected with the renovated human nature.⁷⁴ That is why the whole of creation expresses empathy for the passion of Christ and rejoices in the resurrection.⁷⁵ In his lyrical vein Gregory also portrays the scenery of a cosmic salvation in unity with the risen Christ: nature is illuminated, it exhibits clearer outlines, creatures exploit to the greatest possible degree their natural qualifications and properties; everything – including man – comes back to its state of harmony and liberty. ‘The dolphin leaps up blowing in delight’ and ‘the proud horse, having broken his chains, is swimming in the river’. And from the hymn of creation humans are inspired to offer their own hymn.⁷⁶ For the Irish commentator the very event of the incarnation verifies that humanity cannot be saved – we cannot become whole – apart from the *mater terra* that we come from, and apart from the earth of our body. On the contrary, our body is the earth that produces the fruit of sanctity and is wrapped around by the celestial vestment of mysteries.⁷⁷ This salvation is the result of the union of Godhead and Manhood in Christ, in whose incarnated hypostasis the interchange of natural properties took place. As God He gave grace, and He received that grace as man and on behalf of all men.⁷⁸

It is true that in our minds freedom and love are immediately connected with the person, while sometimes they do give a sense of transcending or, conversely, being pinioned by natural constraints. The reason is that the person is the agent who has at one’s disposal all this innate treasure. But the suspicion lurks that a person who chases its priority as if it were the ultimate source and generator of love and freedom and enjoys their primacy over their own natural ground as a Kantian extra-terrestrial subject, a person who exclusively grants otherness to others or passively receives otherness from them, is in danger either of being lost in a universe of external determination⁷⁹ or of being absorbed with a transcendental ego, constituting its own narcissistic reality in self-love and illusory relationships. Is that being not on the threshold of self-deification in the very act of communion, taken up into a theatre of vainglory, ambition and coercion?